Social Innovation Plus – Competence Centres (SI Plus)

Kick-off Meeting Network "Sustainable Development"

10 November 2022, Online

Report

Welcome

L&R representatives welcomed the participants and highlighted the eminent role of social innovation in sustainable development. This S&D network of the SI PLUS project is closely connected to the other two networks, dealing with administrative capacity and social inclusion.

Icebreaker

Participants highlighted the strong interconnection between SI and sustainable development, especially in relation to the quality of life.

See annex 2.

Thematic input from the EC/DG Empl

DG EMPL highlighted the 3 main challenges of the green deal:

- That a climate-neutral Europe is reached by 2050;
- Decouple economic growth from the use of resources;
- Ensure that no one is left behind.

He also highlighted the importance of the 'fit for 55' package. Reducing emissions also bear the chance to create jobs – he referred to a publication issued by the JRC "The future of Jobs is Green". The Russian invasion in Ukraine has further exacerbated energy poverty, which is why the clean energy transition needs to be fostered, e.g. via the EU roadmap "Repower EU".

Climate neutrality also needs a fair transition, where skilled workforce will be needed and the lack thereof could be a considerable bottleneck. A Council recommendation was adopted on ensuring a fair transition towards climate neutrality.

Social Innovation can help to think about a fair transition and provide a bigger picture. In the context of the green deal, social acceptability matters a lot – i.e., that the Green Deal is taken up by a wider public. A call (10 Mio. €) was launched for "social innovations for a fair green and digital transition (ESF-2022-SOC-INNOV)" in order to conduct capacity building, enhance communication, reskilling and upskilling, etc. Other aspects of social innovation in the green transition are consumer behaviour or job transitions. Projects are going to start early next year. In the discussion the topic was brought up to what extent Social Innovation can work as a silo breaker, for example between the different funds.

See Annex 3

The foundation for environment in Austria

The association Aufleb's activities started in 1995, when the basic idea of the foundation was to help people in the food and beverage sector who had lost their job, more than 7000 people have so far been supported. Aufleb implements since 2022 the foundation for environment, that was initiated by the Austrian social partners (Chamber of Commerce and Chamber of Labour). There are two main target groups of the foundation: 1) unemployed (interested in a qualification in green jobs) and 2) companies with a need of employees in green jobs. While the former can be provided with a training, the latter have the opportunity to recruit or train staff on the job. Qualifications from short-term trainings to university degrees could be financed. The main focus is on hard skills and technical jobs. Women are also motivated to join the foundation.

HU highlighted its interest to cooperate in this regard.

See annex 4

Presentation of the KAKAWCO+ project

This social enterprise has established a chocolate business in Slovakia, in close cooperation with an initiative for sustainable cocoa plantation in Colombia, South America. KakawCo+ imports and distributes original and genuine cacao of superior quality made by former coca plant growers in Colombia. The project employs disadvantaged and hard-to-employ people in its own integration packing facility in Bratislava. There are several target groups, the farmers in Colombia, but also in Slovakia people with disabilities participate in the packaging of the products, which helps them to be reintegrated on the labour market. Kakawco+ thereby

combines sustainable food production on a global level with social inclusion and corporate responability.

See [presentation](#).

Presentation of the LAB project

The [LAB project](#) is an ESF-funded project that provides trainings for elderly long-term unemployed and intends to close the digital divide via training. There are two main groups of participants:

1) Transitional employees who repair the notebooks (50+, with medical conditions) and
2) Training participants who receive digital skills (unemployed, low-income, at risk of poverty).

They repair laptops and thereby acquire digital skills, while these 2nd hand laptops are rented for free and serve the purpose of the circular economy. The laptops are also used for the trainings, especially for people at the margins of society. If laptops cannot be reused, they are dismantled and their parts are processed elsewhere, sometimes also as decorative objects. The pandemic has even increased the need for notebooks within the population. So far, more than 500 laptops have been collected, more than the half of which were reused as functioning devices, that were rented for free. A follow-up project is planned for the upcoming funding period.

The SK representative mentioned a similar project in Trnava, where repaired laptops are sold to the state administration.

See Annex 5

Discussions of next steps & conclusions

The idea of the network is to reach out beyond the project consortium of SI PLUS. The BG representative mentioned that the meeting can help in designing ESF programmes and that she is going to invite experts from the respective ESF MAs. Participants decided to maintain the structure of this meeting, with a focus on rescaling and exchange of experience and good practice, including with the MAs, especially with a view to new calls. Bilateral connections between the projects for further exchange are going to be enabled by the SI PLUS project management team. All participants are invited to share their ideas for the upcoming meetings.

Annexes:
1. Agenda
2. Icebreaker - results
3. Presentation of the EC
4. Presentation of the foundation for environment in Austria
5. Presentation LAB